



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

October 21, 2016

Tom Wheeler, Chair Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Return \$170 million in Connect America Funds to Upstate New York

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

I am writing in support of a petition for expedited waiver of the Connect America Phase II (Phase II) auction rules filed by New York State (New York). Specifically I wish to express support for the request that the Commission waive its Phase II auction rules to make available to New York the amount of Phase II model-based support (approximately \$170.4 million) that Verizon declined in the state so that the support can be allocated as part of New York's upcoming competitive reverse auction.

The Connect America Fund provides critical support in expanding high-speed internet access to unserved and underserved portions of upstate New York, and it would be unfair to deny New York this incredible opportunity. In the Adirondacks and across upstate New York, over 220,000 households still lack access to broadband service. In the North Country, a lack of access to broadband is a competitive disadvantage for children attending school, businesses looking to start in a rural area, and for Hamlets and Villages seeking to offer amenities, like WiFi, that are now necessary to be competitive in the tourism industry. The FCC should not take any action that diverts Connect America Funds that are left over from last year's auction to another state. New York State is a net donor of \$1 billion to this program and it is unfair for the FCC to take any action that would divert the \$170 million.

The FCC should look to align its auction with the Governor's New NY Broadband Initiative. It is our understanding that there are carriers in New York that would accept the funding, in addition to the price cap incumbents. The Governor's program is a \$500 million state commitment to build broadband in unserved and underserved communities and is the largest of its kind in the country. Additionally, the New NY Broadband Initiative is offering a better technical solution to those communities with a commitment from the Governor to build broadband infrastructure to support an internet speed of at least 100 Mbps (megabits per second) as opposed to 10 Mbps that is being offered by the FCC. Should the FCC align its program with the Governor's, this pilot project could create a model state-federal partnership that deals real results for New York residents.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our concerns and ideas. We offer our comments respectfully, and with as much emphasis as we possibly can.

Sincerely,



Anthony G. Collins
President

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